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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

**SHARED BLAME (INERTIAL LEADERSHIP, INDISCIPLINE, AND HORSE
BLINDERS): THE FAILURE OF THE “OTHER” CONFEDERATE CAVALRY
BRIGADES DURING THE GETTYSBURG CAMPAIGN (28 MAY-1 JULY 1863)**

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ABSTRACT (MAXIMUM 200 WORDS) The Confederate Cavalry that remained with the main body of the Army of Northern Virginia during the initial days of the Gettysburg Campaign failed to assume Stuart's eastern flank reconnaissance and security mission when he was unable to perform it. Evidence shows that there is shared responsibility for this failure among commanders at the brigade, division, corps, and army levels. Much of the blame of their failure to perform reconnaissance and security is placed on the Confederate Cavalry Commander, J. E. B. Stuart. What is often overlooked are the actions of the cavalry formations that remained with General R. E. Lee. This force of four brigades had the opportunity to fill the gap left by Stuart and could have provided Lee with the reconnaissance, security, and intelligence he needed. This paper examines the performance of those cavalry formations and studies why they did not, or could not, assume Stuart's mission on the eastern flank. Conclusions are that the following contributed to this failure: 1) Leadership and Initiative, 2) Capabilities of the Cavalry, 3) Command and Control and Staff Organizations, and 4) Attitude of the Army of Northern Virginia and the Cavalry.		
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: **SHARED BLAME** (INERTIAL LEADERSHIP, INDISCIPLINE, AND HORSE BLINDERS): THE FAILURE OF THE “OTHER” CONFEDERATE CAVALRY BRIGADES DURING THE GETTYSBURG CAMPAIGN (28 MAY-1 JULY 1863)

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Thesis: The Confederate Cavalry that remained with the main body of the Army of Northern Virginia during the initial days of the Gettysburg Campaign failed to assume Stuart’s eastern flank reconnaissance and security mission when he was unable to perform it. Evidence shows that there is shared responsibility for this failure among commanders at the brigade, division, corps, and army levels.

Discussion: Much attention has been paid to the performance of the Confederate Cavalry during the Gettysburg Campaign. Much of the blame of their failure to perform reconnaissance and security is placed on the Confederate Cavalry Commander, J. E. B. Stuart. What is often overlooked are the actions of the cavalry formations that remained with General R. E. Lee. This force of four brigades had the opportunity to fill the gap left by Stuart and could have provided Lee with the reconnaissance, security, and intelligence he needed. This paper examines the performance of those cavalry formations and studies why they did not, or could not, assume Stuart’s mission on the eastern flank. These circumstances can be studied to better understand what went wrong in the preparation and execution of the campaign and why.

Conclusions:

Leadership and Initiative: Leaders at all levels, specifically the brigade commanders of cavalry, displayed a lack of initiative in reacting to the friendly situation and remaining on a narrowly defined focus of their initial missions despite a need to adjust for the absence of Stuart. Furthermore, the cavalry leaders did not possess or display the aggressiveness in their own or their units’ actions required during a dynamic cavalry mission.

Capabilities of the Cavalry: The cavalry brigades that remained with the main body did not possess the experience or discipline to remain flexible to the changing situation and perform the reconnaissance and security expected by the leadership of the Army of Northern Virginia.

Command and Control Relationships and Staff Organizations: The command and control relationships, reporting structure, and expectations for direction of these remaining brigades were not clearly understood nor executed. Furthermore, imprecise orders did not allow for the flexible employment or clear direction of the forces at hand. These circumstances were exacerbated by the lack of staff at the army level and an over reliance on Stuart who was not in position to act as chief of cavalry during the campaign.

Attitude of the Army of Northern Virginia and the Cavalry: A feeling of overconfidence in the leadership of the Army of Northern Virginia based on previous successes created an unhealthy atmosphere for command during a potentially risky operational setting. The reluctance to adjust cavalry missions based on a pervasive assurance that things would “work out” reduced the flexibility of the army to react to the changing situation.

METHODOLOGY

This work studies the circumstances around the Confederate cavalry performance during the Gettysburg campaign. It focuses on the brigades that remained with Lee and the main body during the initial days of the attack. Chapter One introduces the subject and outlines the questions and approach to the situation. Chapter Two discusses the background of the campaign, command and organization of the cavalry formations, and their initial missions and orders for the attack. Chapter Three looks at the performance of each of the brigades and the actions of the commanders. Chapter Four analyzes these actions and circumstances in several key areas to describe why these brigades performed as they did and what factors contributed to the outcome. Finally, Chapter Five draws conclusions based on this analysis.

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Chapter 1

The Cavalry Controversy

It is a popular belief that General J. E. B. Stuart disregarded Lee's orders for the invasion of Pennsylvania and, instead of paralleling Ewell's route and protecting his right, rode around the Army of the Potomac, engaged in fruitless side-enterprises, and ended up by failing to rejoin his own army until the last stage of the Battle of Gettysburg. In the meantime Lee knew nothing of Stuart's whereabouts, received no information of Hookers' movement, and presumably was obliged to carry out his risky major foray deep in enemy country without benefit of cavalry reconnaissance or flank security. The controversy has never been satisfactorily resolved. One widely accepted version, that Gettysburg might have resulted in a Confederate victory and thus altered the course of history, had Lee's cavalry function as he intended it should, and had Stuart suppressed his undoubted flair for glamorous exploits, *fails to take into account a number of factors which had a decided influence on the event and which place a goodly portion of the responsibility on General Lee himself.*¹

The performance of the Confederate Cavalry during the Gettysburg Campaign of 1863 is a topic of significant research and great debate. Major General James Ewell Brown (JEB) Stuart's performance specifically has come under the microscope of historical analysis. History has generally pointed a finger of blame at his failure to screen the right of the confederate main body, as it moved north through Maryland and into Pennsylvania. Many argue that because of his failure General Robert E. Lee was left without intelligence on the movement of the Army of the Potomac.

An issue of equal and considerable attention is the performance of the other cavalry formations that remained with Lee and the main body during the movement. Stuart's "ride around" the Army of the Potomac left him out of contact with the main body and the remaining four brigades of cavalry. Over a period of several critical days, Lee, his corps commanders, and the brigade commanders of cavalry moved north without

¹ Edward G. Stackpole, *They Met at Gettysburg* (USA: Stackpole Books, 1956), 44.

the eyes and ears of reconnaissance and surveillance on their exposed eastern flank.

What were the remaining brigades of cavalry with the main body doing during this period? Why did these units fail to adjust to Stuart's absence and provide this most needed reconnaissance and surveillance?

This paper will focus on the brigades of cavalry that remained with the main body. By examining their performance during the early days of the campaign and the circumstances surrounding their employment, we shall discover that there is shared responsibility for this failure.

Purpose and Scope

This work will not dissect the controversy of Stuart's ride to the east of the Army of the Potomac and issues that surround the orders and decisions of that action. There is a great body of work that studies those issues and details surrounding the circumstances that caused Stuart to arrive at Gettysburg on July 2nd. For the purposes of this examination, this paper will consider the circumstances that surround the actions and employment of the brigades of cavalry that remained with the main body. Looking at these facts, one may better understand their performance during the early days of the campaign, specifically from 28 May to 1 July 1863.

Chapter 2

The Campaign, Cavalry, and Missions

The Confederate successes during Chancellorsville emboldened the South. Lee saw an opportunity to carry the fight back to the North and win a decisive battle on its terrain. Lee convinced President Jefferson Davis and the Confederate cabinet that the Eastern Theater had greater military importance and potential for decisive victory than did the West. If he were successful, Lee envisioned the following positive developments:

- Richmond would be momentarily safe, as an attack into the North would force the Army of the Potomac to follow, thus removing the threat.

- Northern leaders would be compelled to withdraw troops from the Southern and Western Theaters to defend against the threat. This would potentially take pressure off the southern forces in the Western Theater.

- The northern peace movement would be encouraged and could potentially change President Lincoln's attitude toward a negotiated settlement.

- Britain and France might be convinced that the Confederacy was a nation that should be taken seriously and potentially grant foreign assistance for its cause.

- Much needed provisions and supplies could be gained from the rich and plentiful Cumberland Valley of Pennsylvania, removing the stress from the Shenandoah Valley.²

In late May and June of 1863, Lee prepared the Army of Northern Virginia for the Campaign.

² Thomas E. Griess, *The American Civil War* (New Jersey: Avery Publishing Group Inc., 1984), 352.

Cavalry Importance

Lee's exact geographical objective was not clear. His plan was to meet the Army of the Potomac at a time and place of his choosing, preferably deep in northern territory, defeat them, and threaten Washington DC. This movement into enemy territory would place the army at great risk. The long march column would be vulnerable to a flank attack by the repositioning Union forces. It would be critical for Lee to understand the enemy disposition and screen his movement north until he could set the conditions to meet the Union army. Effective performance of his cavalry in reconnaissance and security roles would be key to the army's success for five important reasons.

The advance would take place on the enemy's terrain. Although the Army of Northern Virginia had attacked through Maryland in 1862, and there were Marylanders in the army, the terrain was largely unfamiliar and the population hostile. The advantage that commanders had had in fighting on their familiar home terrain of Virginia would now be the enemy's in the North. Lee and his army would need every resource at their disposal, and the cavalry was an important one in confirming the terrain, its current condition, and suitably to movement and battle and sustaining the army.

Lee's intent was to choose the time and place for battle. His ability to keep the initiative in these situations had been a large part of his success thus far. Lee needed to understand the disposition of the enemy so that he could choose a place to strike at his advantage. The cavalry's ability to conduct accurate and timely reconnaissance and surveillance during the movement would be key to achieving this goal.

The Confederate advance into the North would compel Union forces to reposition. Elements from within the theater, the main body of the Army of the Potomac, and

potentially units defending Washington, would move quickly against Lee once they determined his location and intentions. Additionally, units from the Western Theater could be used to reinforce the East. The cavalry could provide Lee a moving flank screen that would be critical in ascertaining the enemy's reaction and plans to attack.

Part of Lee's concept of the advance in the north was to gain much needed supplies for the army. The rich Cumberland Valley, with its relatively untouched private farms and population centers, held substantial supplies. The cavalry's experience and effectiveness in foraging and raiding would be critical to procuring these resources for the army.

The army would attack in a column of infantry corps with supply trains intermixed but generally following. Although commanders at all levels would make efforts to reduce the amount of supplies by bringing just what they needed, the supply trains would still be substantial. These trains would be long, slow, and vulnerable to enemy interdiction. Cavalry forces would have to screen the flanks of these trains and the approaches that the enemy could use to attack them. The cavalry would be critical for this security and protecting the valleys and passes that led back to Virginia.

Cavalry Order of Battle

During preparations for the campaign, Lee focused great effort in reorganizing the army and replacing the losses from the Chancellorsville campaign. The cavalry division organization was not changed, but after Chancellorsville, it was in need of reinforcement, as each of the brigades was under strength and lacked horses.

To strengthen Stuart's command, Lee assigned Brigadier General W. E. ("Grumble") Jones' brigade of cavalry from the Shenandoah Valley. The brigade

consisted of four regiments and a battalion that would increase the strength of the cavalry assets available to the army. Up until this point, Lee desired to keep Jones and Stuart apart. “The two did not get along together, for Jones, though an able commander had a hatred for Stuart which bordered on the pathological.” The feeling was mutual. Jones, like Stuart, was a West Point graduate, but older than his new commander. Their personalities clashed from the outset of the war. Stuart was so unhappy with Lee’s decision to place Jones under his command that he even suggested to Lee that Jones be assigned to the infantry. Lee not only refused but cautioned Stuart that he must not let his “judgment be warped” by the ill feelings between the men.³

The hatred, however, was deep. Jones had lost his wife in a shipwreck in 1852 and had never emotionally recovered. A strict disciplinarian, he did not enjoy the favor of his men. When he found that Lee was reassigning him to Stuart's command, Jones asked to be relieved. However, because Lee had faith in his abilities, his request was denied.⁴ Lee knew that he needed as much cavalry as he could assemble for this operation. Jones’ force would give a much-needed increase to the strength of Stuart’s division. This relationship is noteworthy, as the inability of these two commanders to serve together would affect the assignment of missions and orders as the campaign progressed.

Lee ordered Brigadier General A. G. Jenkins' brigade of cavalry to replace Jones’ in the valley. Jenkins’ command was often referred to as Jenkins’ mounted infantry, as it did not possess the same skills and discipline as the cavalry under Stuart’s command. It

³ Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign: A Study in Command*. (USA: Simon & Schuster, 1968) 15.

⁴ Jerome F. Bierly, *Promises to Keep: Lee, Stuart, and the Cavalry during the Gettysburg Campaign*. (USA: Marine Corps Development and Education Command, 1982), 40.

also did not have the depth of experience in screening and security operations that Stuart's division possessed. Although their numbers contributed to the overall strength of the cavalry in the army, their potential for performance was suspect. Lee hoped that they could be "whipped into shape, whether under Jenkins' continued leadership [Lee] was not sure at the time."⁵

Lee assigned additional cavalry forces from Major General D. H. Hill's command in North Carolina. Brigadier General Beverly Robertson's brigade of two regiments was assigned to Stuart's command to further increase the division's strength. Even though Hill thought he already had insufficient forces to repel a potential invasion, he considered losing Robertson good riddance.⁶ Robertson fancied himself as a dashing cavalryman and maintained the image with a long beard and mustache, as was part of the style of the times. A West Point graduate, he was a strict disciplinarian. His overly demanding style caused him to be unpopular with his troops.⁷ Although he had considerable combat experience from the Indian Wars, he lacked leadership and the managerial discipline of a commander. He was a difficult subordinate. Stuart's adjutant, Lieutenant Colonel W. W. Blackford, had the following to say about Robertson. "General Robertson was an excellent man in camp to train troops, but in the field, in the presence of the enemy, he lost all self-possession, and was perfectly unreliable."⁸ His utility to Stuart was questionable from the beginning.

Lee would order one other force to serve with the army during the campaign. Brigadier General John D. Imboden commanded a mounted force of assorted armed

⁵ Coddington, 15.

⁶ Coddington, 16.

⁷ Bierly, 40.

⁸ W.W. Blackford, *War Years with JEB Stuart* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993), 229.

riders. They possessed skills in foraging, raiding, and robbing civilians, which would be useful in capturing supplies during the campaign. They had displayed some success in previous raids in Yankee West Virginia. But, they were not an effective reconnaissance and security force. The brigade lacked the experience of operating as cavalry for a larger infantry force. The men were generally unruly and untrained in traditional cavalry tactics and operations. Imboden's force was of questionable value against veteran enemy cavalry.⁹

Lee relied on Stuart to control the Army's cavalry and report intelligence they gained to him and the corps commanders. During previous campaigns, this relationship proved effective. The impending campaign would present significant challenges to this reliance. These additional brigades were not part of Stuart's organic division that understood and were comfortable with this relationship. The missions and orders assigned would also convolute command and reporting procedures and would be geographically separated from Stuart's direct control. This dynamic would contribute to the cavalry's poor performance in the upcoming operation.

Brandy Station

Over the preceding years of campaigning with Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia, Stuart and his cavalry had developed a reputation that was legend not only to the men of these proud and capable organizations, but to the enemy. By June 8th 1863, Stuart's division had completed preparations for the campaign, and Stuart sponsored a grand review and demonstration of his legendary division for their commander and for the entertainment of Northern Virginia civilians. On June 9th, Major General Alfred Pleasonton's Federal cavalry corps executed a surprise attack, catching Stuart's division

⁹ Coddington, 17.

off guard in encampments near Brandy Station. Although neither side suffered significant losses, the engagement was a set back for Stuart's force. No longer were they revered by supporters in the South, or more importantly by the enemy, as an unbeatable force. Based on his poor showing, Stuart felt that he had something to prove in the upcoming campaign.¹⁰ The Union cavalry, bolstered by their performance, knew they could now face the renowned Confederate cavalry and win.

Initial Orders

Lee had developed his concept of maneuver over the preceding weeks and issued orders through conversations and letters to his commanders. On June 22nd, Stuart, whose division was guarding the passes into the Blue Ridge Mountains, received the following instructions from Lee (abbreviated in part below):

If you find that he (Hooker) is moving northward, and that two Brigades can guard the Blue Ridge and take care of your rear, you can move with the other three into Maryland, and take positions on General Ewell's right, place yourself in communication with him, guard his flank and keep him informed of the enemy's movements, and collect all the supplies you can for the use of the Army. You will, of course, take charge of Jenkins' brigade and give him necessary instructions.¹¹

Lee also issued the further orders, which Stuart received on June 23rd:

If General Hooker's Army remains inactive, you can leave two Brigades to watch him, and withdraw with the three others, but should he not appear to be moving northward, I think you had better withdraw this (west) side of the mountains tomorrow night, cross at Shepherdstown next day, and move over to Fredericktown. You will, however, be able to judge whether you can pass around their Army without hindrance, doing them all the damage you can, and cross the river east of the mountains. In either case, after crossing the river, you must move on and feel the right of Ewell's troops, collecting information, provisions, etc. Give instructions to the commander of the brigades left behind to watch the flank and rear of the army and (in the event of the enemy leaving their front) retire from the mountains west of the Shenandoah, leaving sufficient pickets to guard the

¹⁰ Greiss, 149.

¹¹ Edward G. Stackpole, *They Met at Gettysburg* (USA: Stackpole Books, 1956), 45.

passes, and bringing everything clean along the valley, closing upon the rear of the army. I think the sooner you cross into Maryland, after tomorrow, the better.¹²

These orders, although not concise, were descriptive and discretionary in nature. Stuart knew he had to leave two brigades to cover the passes into the Shenandoah and the rear of the Army and supply trains. Stuart had his doubts in Robertson's abilities, because he was unreliable in the face of the enemy. His poor performance in the war thus far left questions as to his capability to command, and Stuart even commented "Bev Robertson [is] by far the most troublesome man I have to deal with."¹³

Despite his intense dislike for "Grumble" Jones, Stuart did have an appreciation for his potential to command. If placed under Robertson, Stuart could count on his ability to act professionally and ensure the success of the brigades. Because of his apprehensions, Stuart issued Robertson (and Jones through him) specific orders on June 24th, 1863, that addressed his intentions and concerns by detailing exactly what the brigades were to do.

Brigadier General B. H. Robertson, commanding cavalry:

General: Your own and General Jones' brigades will cover the front to Ashby's and Snicker's Gaps, yourself, as senior officer, being in command.

Your object will be to watch the enemy, deceive him as to our designs, and to harass his rear if you find he is retiring. Be always on the alert; let nothing escape your observation, and miss no opportunity which offers to damage the enemy, after the enemy has moved beyond your reach, leave sufficient pickets in the mountains and withdraw to the west side of the Shenandoah, and place a strong and reliable picket to watch the enemy at Harper's Ferry, cross the Potomac and follow the army, keeping on its right and rear. As long as the enemy remains in your front in force, unless otherwise ordered by General R. E. Lee, Lt. Gen. Longstreet, or myself, hold the gaps with a line of pickets reaching across

¹² Stackpole, 47.

¹³ Mark Nesbitt, *Saber and Scapegoat, J.E.B. Stuart and the Gettysburg Controversy* (USA: Stackpole Books, 1994), 70.

the Shenandoah by Charleston to the Potomac. If, in the contingency mentioned, you withdraw, sweep the valley clear of what pertains to the army and cross the Potomac at different points crossed by it. You will instruct Gen. Jones from time to time as the movements progress, or events may require, and report anything of importance to Lt. Gen. Longstreet, with whose position you will communicate by relays through Charleston. I send instruction for Gen. Jones, which please read. Avail yourself of every means in your power to increase the efficiency of your command and keep it up to the highest number possible. Particular attention will be paid to shoeing horses and to marching off the turnpikes. In case of an advance of the enemy you will offer such resistance as will be justifiable to check him and discover his intention, and, if possible, you will prevent him from gaining possession of the gaps. In case of a move by the enemy upon Warrenton, you will counteract it as much as you can, compatible with previous instruction. You will have with you the two brigades, two batteries of horse artillery.¹⁴

Based on these, Robertson would command the security operations of the passes. Some in the army, including General James Longstreet, the Commander of I Corps whom the Robertson-Jones screen would protect, expected Stuart to assign the mission to the more capable and effective brigade under the proven excellence of Brigadier General Wade Hampton. Nevertheless, Stuart saved his three tested and proven brigades under Hampton, Fitz Lee, and Chambliss for the dangerous and important mission he envisioned in the east, and left Robertson and Jones behind. It is important to note that in these orders and in Lee's, the employment of this force is under the operational control of Stuart but specified to report intelligence to Longstreet. Additionally, it was to respond to orders from Lee, Longstreet, and Stuart. Stuart felt that this force of 3,000 would perform the tasks required by Lee, and move with the army as if he himself were there.¹⁵ He outlined their tasks specifically in his orders and felt this force would be strong enough to accomplish the mission.

¹⁴ Bierly, 56.

¹⁵ Nesbitt, 70.

Lee envisioned a cordon of cavalry moving on the flanks and to the front of the army. Lee ordered Jenkins brigade to move in front of General Richard S. Ewell's II Corps. Although Jenkins' brigade had not worked with infantry and his screening skills were questionable, it would certainly be able to identify enemy along the route. His command was described as mounted infantry and did not possess the training, experience, and discipline of Stuart's troopers. Jenkins' troopers were better foragers than anything else but were expected to be of assistance to Ewell's corps.¹⁶ To which command Jenkins was to report is not clear. Lee, in his orders stated above, envisioned that Stuart would give instructions to Jenkins once he joined up to screen Ewell's eastern flank. Ewell understood that Jenkins was to be to his front and would need to coordinate movement between the elements and appreciate the intelligence he would gather. Stuart, however, saw the detachment as a relationship with Ewell, and Lee for that matter, and felt that those commanders would direct Jenkins' troopers until he joined the formation.¹⁷

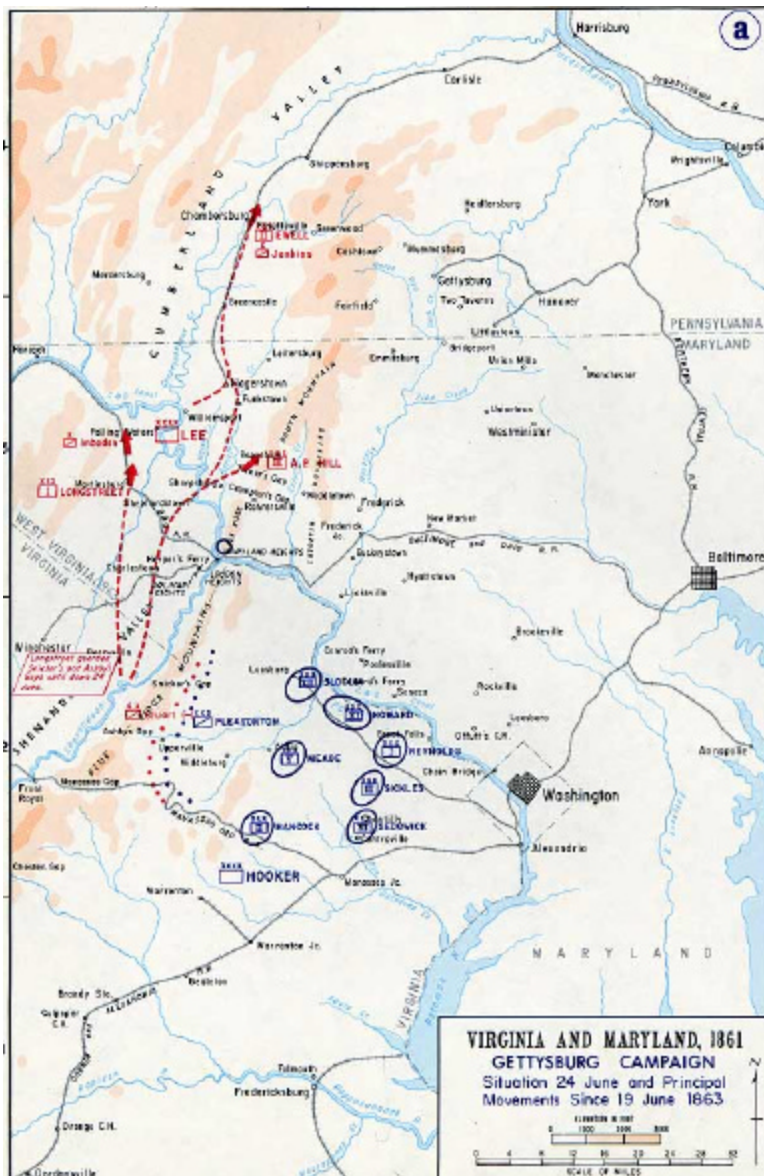
Imboden was also detached from Stuart's command in June. His orders from Lee were to, "forage off the army's left, to wreck Union railroads and supply bases, and to demonstrate in the vicinity of Romney, West Virginia, in aid of Ewell's offensive against Winchester."¹⁸ His brigade would form the northwestern and western flank of the cavalry screen and would be key to accomplishing the goal of gaining supplies for the army. His force of 2,100 included artillery and was a formidable cavalry brigade, but as noted earlier, were more suited to partisan ranger and mounted infantry tactics than to the speed and shock effect of a well-drilled force. Imboden would receive orders directly from Lee.

¹⁶ Coddington, 15.

¹⁷ Nesbitt, 70.

¹⁸ Nesbitt, 245.

As the brigades of cavalry with the main body (in excess of 8,000 men) began the campaign with the orders described above, Stuart formed the remaining three brigades under his direct command. The brigades of Wade Hampton, Fitzhugh Lee, and W.H.F Lee totaled less than 5,000 troopers.¹⁹ It was not so much a question of what Stuart's force was to do as much as it was how he should do it. Colonel John S. Mosby, a



confederate cavalry raider who led a band of partisan rangers in the eastern theater, scouted the Army of the Potomac and advised Stuart that the enemy was thin and he could easily pass to their rear and east.²⁰ Stuart understood he was to link up with Ewell's flank. Stuart requested and received permission to take his remaining three brigades of cavalry to the east of the Union forces and rejoin the army and

¹⁹ Stackpole, 49.

²⁰ Stackpole, 49.

Ewell's brigade in the north. Lee approved that Stuart could do so if "without hindrance".²¹ Then on June 25th, Stuart began his now infamous move to the east and between the Army of the Potomac and Washington D. C. He separated from the main body and began a movement that would essentially keep him out of contact with Lee and the remaining cavalry brigade commanders until July 2nd.

Based on these early orders and actions described above, the stage was set for cavalry operations in late June. Stuart's ride to the east of the Army of the Potomac would leave the eastern flank of the Confederate main body exposed to the Union cavalry. This did not fit Lee's concept of the movement, fulfill his requirements for intelligence on enemy activity, nor prevent being scouted by Union cavalry. While Lee did not know where Stuart was, he knew where he was not, as he had neither reports from him directly nor reports of his whereabouts from other friendly units. However, during this entire time, the brigades of Jenkins, Imboden, Jones, and Robertson remained with the main body. This situation raises the question of why these resources were not used to screen the eastern flank of the army, either through direction by Lee, his staff, subordinate commanders, or the cavalry leaders themselves. And as we shall see, the commanders did not adjust the mission of these units to the important screening of the main army's eastern flank.

²¹ Griess, 154

Map from Thomas E. Griess, *Atlas of The American Civil War* (New Jersey: Avery Publishing Group Inc., 1984), 34.

Chapter 3

Flawed Execution

During the initial phases of the operation, Stuart's cavalry brigades and the brigades with the main body did their job and eased the forward movement of the Army of Northern Virginia as it began its attack north. Over a period of almost three weeks in June, Union and Confederate cavalry units clashed on the flanks of the army, as Lee's lead elements began their movement. Although the brigades were initially successful in the security zone fight, the effectiveness of the screen envisioned by Lee was reduced when Stuart separated from the army on June 25th. Lee continued his move without a cavalry force on his eastern flank. This chapter will describe the actions of the cavalry brigades remaining with Lee and the reaction of the various leaders and units to the absence of reconnaissance and security on the army's and specifically Ewell's and eastern flank.

As Ewell advanced, he had a force of over 30,000 including the expected cavalry screen of Imboden in the west, Jenkins to his front, and Stuart who would be on his east once his cavalry division crossed the Potomac and linked up with his flank. Jenkins' mission began rather inauspiciously with a raid against Union outposts near the Potomac. Jenkins' cavalry, accompanying General Robert E. Rhodes division, was assigned the task of capturing Union forces under Colonel McReynolds at Berryville and then moving to Martinsburg to capture another garrison under Colonel B. F. Smith of about 1,300 men.²² Jenkins' brigade was slow to respond and, when it finally did move, displayed an inability to quickly close with the slower Union infantry. The cavalry was detected and the enemy escaped to the north.

On June 15th, Jenkins arrived near Chambersburg ahead of the lead division of Ewell's Corps. His actions in depriving the hostile population of their goods and wealth in these initial days would best characterize his and his men's performance during the campaign. Jenkins' raiding skills were effective in securing Yankee arms, supplies, horses, livestock, and Negroes. Although he generally offered payment, it was in Confederate notes and chits of questionable worth. His brigade was effective in the role of raiders and seized between \$100,000 and \$250,000 worth of supplies for Ewell's force.²³

By June 22nd, Jenkins had resumed his march in front of Rhode's division. He used the tactic of sending out small detachments from his main body to continue raiding. He skirmished with Union cavalry at Greencastle and Mechanicsburg. On June 29th, Lee dispatched orders to Ewell to redirect his Corps and consolidate it near Heidlersburg.²⁴

It is during these next few critical days that Jenkins' performance proves most ineffective for the army. Ewell had issued orders for his divisions to change direction and begin the move towards Gettysburg. As Coddington has observed, "His [Ewell's] greatest handicap was his lack of effective cavalry. Although he had at least 2,000 troopers assigned to him, most of them were in Jenkins' command and instead of leading the way and guarding the flanks, for some reason they lagged behind."²⁵ Jenkins was slow to reorient his command and in some cases, elements of his brigade took a full day to react to the change. As a leader, Jenkins was slow to appreciate the changing situation and did not display the flexibility required to react. His force did not have the experience

²² Coddington, 90.

²³ Coddington, 162.

²⁴ Coddington, 189.

²⁵ Coddington, 191.

in cavalry screening operations that would enable them to quickly reorient and reestablish a screen to the front on Ewell's new route of march. There is also no indication that Jenkins was at all concerned that he had not made contact with Stuart's screen expected to his east. Jenkins was narrowly focused on his original task. His actions indicate he was not anticipating a requirement to react to the changing enemy situation. These circumstances left Jenkins following rather than leading Ewell's Corps towards Gettysburg and thus ineffective as a security or reconnaissance force.

In the same vein, Imboden met initial success and achieved his purpose as assigned by Lee to secure supplies in the enemy's territory and destroy infrastructure. As Coddington has noted:

Nothing escaped Lee's attention. He was gratified to hear that General Imboden had caused considerable destruction to the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and Chesapeake and Ohio Canal near Cumberland, Maryland, while gathering in large number of cattle and horse. There was more for Imboden to do, and Lee urged him to advance north of the Potomac but to keep to the left of the army. Obviously Lee had in mind the double advantage of this move which would enable him to tap other parts of the enemy country for supplies and at the same time broaden the front of his invasion.²⁶

He was in communication with Lee and the main body from 16 to 21 June.²⁷ Once he continued his move north, his orientation became more focused on the terrain and the spoils of war rather than reconnaissance for the enemy and security of the western flank of the army. He was in sporadic contact with the elements of Ewell's Corps and Jenkins's cavalry to his east.

When Lee decided to assemble the Army at Cashtown, Imboden was out of contact. As the army redirected its movement toward Gettysburg at the opening of the

²⁶ Coddington, 105

battle, Imboden was left to follow the army into the engagement. He was out of contact with both the army and the enemy near Hancock, Maryland, which is located 50 miles southwest of Chambersburg. Imboden failed to position his force in relationship and proximity to the main body. Like Jenkins, Imboden was narrowly focused on his original task and did not have an appreciation of maintaining the flexibility to react to the needs of the main body based on the changing enemy situation. It is not clear what attempts were made during the march to better coordinate Imboden's movement and position with the lead of the army. When the army turned, he was out of position to react and maintain contact with the west flank or to be available to Lee to move to the eastern flank. As Bierly has observed, "This provoked Lee's wrath as did few events during the war. [Lee] later described Imboden's men and 'unsteady, and I fear, inefficient.'"²⁸

Robertson, continued his guard of Ashby's and Snicker's Gaps. Bierly further notes:

On June 25th, the Union Army began to cross the Potomac at Edward's Ferry. Although this involved thousands of men, Robertson's cavalry either failed to observe it or failed to report it to Lee. Robertson's orders clearly directed him to rejoin the army if the enemy moved beyond his reach. This happened on the 25th, yet he did nothing more than to continue to guard the passes until Lee finally ordered him forward on the 29th. In essence, Robertson and Jones had "missed the war".²⁹

Robertson and Jones did not begin their movement north until July 1st.³⁰

Robertson's orders from Stuart were explicit and they should have moved soon after June 25th. Stuart expected that Robertson and Jones, having accomplished their guard

²⁷ Nesbitt, 55.

²⁸ Bierly, 60.

²⁹ Bierly, 57.

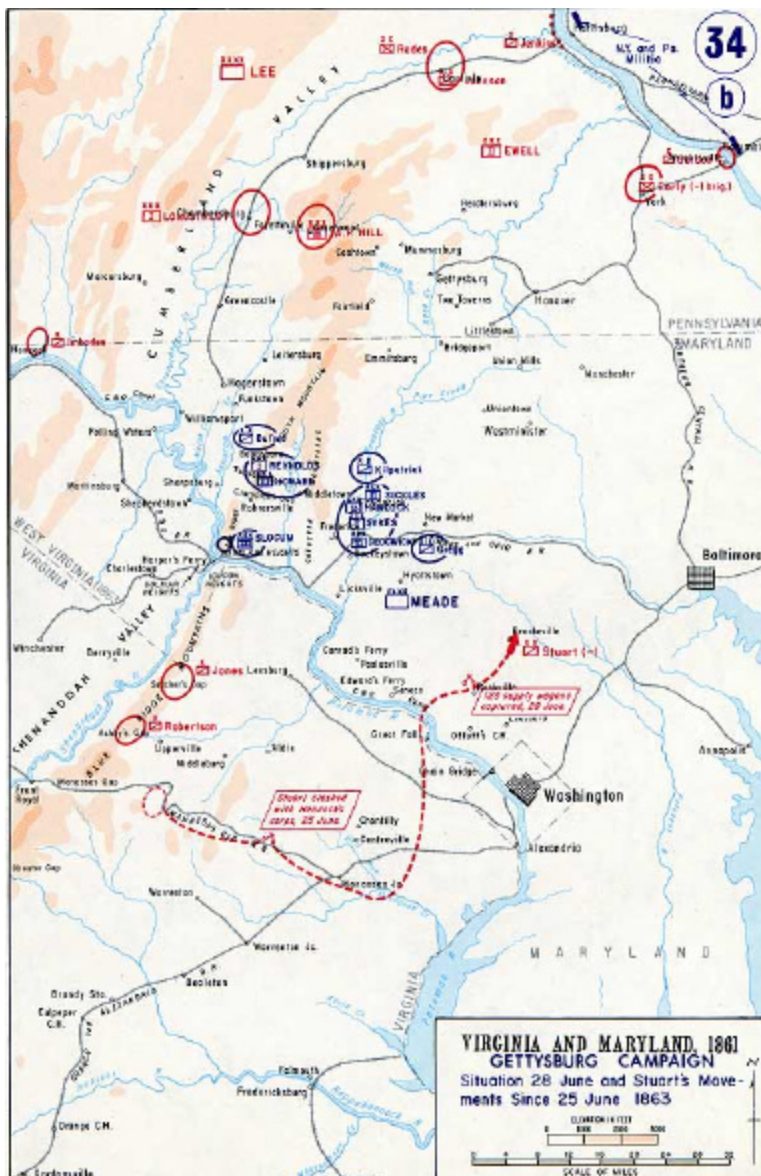
³⁰ Stackpole, 51

mission, would begin to screen the flank of the army and perform all the tasks Stuart would have done, if he had been there.³¹

These brigades, however, “dallied” in the gaps until they received an order from Lee to join the Army at Cashtown. It was only then that this critical force of over 5,000 began its move from the rear of the army towards Gettysburg. Robertson’s actions

display a critical lack of flexibility and anticipation required in this dynamic setting. Although he accomplished his guard mission, his lack of initiative and aggressiveness in identifying the movement of the Union army caused him to fail in his flank screen mission.

From the initial movement of the army into Maryland and Pennsylvania, Lee did not have the reconnaissance needed to make timely decisions on



either the disposition of the enemy or the positioning of his forces for attack. The Union

³¹ Nesbitt, 69-70.

cavalry on the other hand made great use of a lack of Confederate eastern security to continue to maintain contact with the progress of the Confederate Army. As Coddington notes:

Lee...had but a vague notion of the whereabouts of the Northern army. The time had come when the lack of effective cavalry support to screen his advance and to pinpoint the location of enemy forces was impairing Lee's efficiency. If the 2,000 or so cavalry troopers accompanying Ewell had been guided by such wily warriors as Stuart, Wade Hampton, Fitz Lee, or "Grumble" Jones, they might have served to purpose, but under Jenkins they could not cope with tough, aggressive John Buford, who easily kept them from spying on the Union Forces advancing south of Gettysburg. To get information about the Army of the Potomac, Lee and his corps commanders did the next best thing: They sent out scouts.³²

On June 28th, Lee learned through a report from a spy dispatched by Longstreet that the Union army was indeed in Maryland and moving north. Lee was surprised, as he had expected this information much earlier from Stuart on his right. Lee issued orders to his corps commanders to check their movement and begin to march toward assembly points near Gettysburg.³³ After the army adjusted its route of march, the cavalry remained out of position to provide Lee and the corps commanders effective intelligence. As Coddington observes, "When Lee decided to concentrate his army at Cashtown, Imboden and Robertson had not yet made their appearance at Chambersburg. Consequently Lee was forced to leave behind strong detachments of his infantry to do the work of the cavalry in guarding his immediate rear."³⁴

³² Coddington, 196.

³³ Griess, 155.

³⁴ Coddington, 197.

Chapter 4

What Went Wrong and Why

On July 1st, Lee found himself engaged with a growing Union force around Gettysburg. Not fully convinced that this was the time and place of his choosing, his lack of information of the rest of the Army of the Potomac limited his flexibility and capability to make a decision in these early hours of the battle.

What comes into question, given the facts and circumstances described, is the apparent inability of the brigades with the main body to assume Stuart's mission, which was so vital to Lee's ability to make decisions during the attack. This chapter will divide the analysis into the four major areas that inhibited the ability of the cavalry of the Army of Northern Virginia from being more effective during the campaign:

- Leadership and Initiative
- Capabilities of Cavalry
- Command and Control Relationships and Staff Organization
- Mindset of the Army of Northern Virginia and the Cavalry

Leadership and Initiative

Leadership is one of the most important and dynamic elements of combat power and its successful employment. The initiative, character, and intent of a unit leader will shape that organization in training and preparation and is crucial to its effectiveness in execution. The leaders and leadership of not only the cavalry commanders during this operation, but that of the army and corps commanders, had substantial bearing on the cavalry employment during the campaign.

The leadership ability of the four brigade commanders that remained with Lee was in question from the outset of the campaign. As earlier noted, Stuart, Lee, and some of the corps commanders questioned the ability of Jenkins, Imboden, and Robertson. This may have impacted the willingness of Lee and Ewell to issue orders to these brigade commanders to execute more aggressive orders in changing their missions to account for Stuart's absence.

Personalities among leaders are critical not only to the manner and effectiveness in the way they communicate with their subordinates, but also with their peers, and superiors. Jenkins, Imboden, Robertson and Jones had tentative relationships with their men, as their men generally held them in low regard. This would have a significant affect on their ability to maintain flexibility and react to changing situations. Because of their ineffective command relationships, these commanders had not developed a capability on their own to move swiftly in adjusting their missions when the need arose. Stuart pointed out this aspect of leadership after the campaign and commented simply, "Jenkins' cavalry had not been as efficient as it ought to have been."³⁵ Jenkins should have maintained greater situational awareness of the main body and anticipated the potential requirement to reorient his screen based on the changing friendly situation.

Another personality clash and relationship flaw that deeply affected the cavalry employment was the deep-rooted hatred between Jones and Stuart. Although Lee attempted to minimize this by cautioning Stuart to not let such feelings impact his command of Jones, Stuart naturally sought opportunities to separate their units during the campaign. By placing Jones, who was a more capable commander than Robertson, under

³⁵ Coddington, 206.

Robertson's command, Stuart impaired the ability of that two-brigade formation to maintain greater flexibility. Stuart could have also left a more capable commander from his organic division, namely Fitz Lee or Hampton to command that force, but that would have required him to take Jones, or one of the others, north with him.

Initiative is one of the most critical aspects of effective combat leadership. The brigade commanders who remained with Lee showed little initiative in their actions during the initial days of the campaign and seemed unable to overcome the inertia fostered by Lee's command and control difficulties. Lee and his commanders faced a difficult task in controlling the movement of the army. Leaders at all levels needed to understand their mission in relationship to the entire force to facilitate the army's movement and engagement of the enemy on successful terms. The inertia and resistance to action and change coupled with personality conflicts exacerbated the lack of initiative in the cavalry formations and contributed to their failure.

Each of the commanders understood their roles in the army's movement and in the case of Jones and Robertson, were even given specific instructions from Stuart. By following their orders in such narrow definition, they missed the opportunity to see the bigger picture of the army's reconnaissance effort and failed to even question if they were in the best position to serve Lee. Furthermore, once these units did receive orders for consolidation, each reacted slowly to the changing situation.

Lee himself was also considerably culpable in not exercising more initiative when considering the best employment of his organic cavalry. Once he had made the decision to consolidate the army, he was quick to adjust the mission of these four brigades; however, he displayed a remarkable lack of urgency when he was without the eyes and

ears of Stuart for so long. As Coddington observed, "Whatever qualms Lee may have felt about entering an engagement without effective cavalry support he kept pretty well to himself, and he maintained the calm and poised exterior which impressed so many people."³⁶ This may have worked to his detriment, as the enemy situation changed without his knowledge, and he was consequently slow in reorienting his available forces.

Capabilities of Cavalry

The weak capabilities of the brigades that remained with the main body impaired their ability to remain flexible and adjust to the changing situation. Each of these brigades was not part of the organic cavalry division that had campaigned with Stuart and Lee in the preceding years of the war. Their effectiveness was not equal to Stuart's three subordinate brigades, because their men lacked the individual discipline, equipment, and experience in cavalry employment that had been developed by the brigades under Stuart.

Stuart molded his force after European light Cavalry. He favored the saber over the firearm. He trained his men in his belief that the firearm when used mounted delivered ragged accuracy, no matter how near the target. Furthermore he saw his forces as best used in the mounted attack, which could overwhelm other cavalry, incoherent infantry, and unsupported artillery through shock and quick action.³⁷

Jenkins' and Imboden's brigades had different experiences and used other methods. "As one of Stuart's troopers explained, the brigades of Jenkins and Imboden were called cavalry but were essentially mounted infantry and only effective as such... the Confederate cavalry proper hardly considered those forces as actually belonging to the army, but rather as species of irregular auxiliaries." In addition to their lack of

³⁶ Coddington, 197.

³⁷ Edward G. Longacre, *The Cavalry at Gettysburg* (USA: Associated University Press, Inc., 1986), 34.

experience under Stuart's command, these units were equipped with inappropriate firearms, some having smoothbores and shotguns.³⁸

In addition to a lack of experience in Stuartian cavalry operations, the men of these units generally lacked the individual discipline of an effective reconnaissance force. Cavalry operations demand that small units be able to operate independently and often out of contact with their leaders. This requires great individual soldier discipline, mastery of individual and small unit skills, and an understanding of their leader's intent. Of the units that remained with Lee, especially Imboden and Jenkins, the majority of their experiences during the war had been as raiders and partisan rangers, not the duties needed here. The type of men attracted to these units and the general lawlessness that accompanied such operations presented difficult situations to control. Such chaotic situations coupled with a poor leadership often led to troopers that lacked discipline. This fact was evident in Jenkins' unit during the campaign. Accounts of their raiding indicated that they went beyond that required to secure the supplies needed for the army and disrupt the Union war effort. Eyewitness accounts describe the conduct of the cavalry as barbaric and showing wanton disregard for property that had no value to them whatsoever.³⁹

These two aspects of the brigades bring into question their ability to perform not only their assigned missions, but also their ability to adjust and react to the changing enemy and friendly situation that they and the army faced. One could argue that had one of Stuart's own brigades been in such a position, it may have been able to adjust to the situation and provide effective reconnaissance and security. As was displayed in their

³⁸ Longacre, 34.

³⁹ Stackpole, 32.

sluggish reaction to the orders to assemble, the capabilities of the brigades may not have allowed a flexible reaction on the move, even if ordered.

Command and Control Relationships and Staff Organization

The inclusion of the additional brigades of cavalry prior to the campaign and their relationship to the command and control structure raises questions as to who was most responsible for assigning and adjusting their mission during the movement. Stuart was the commander of cavalry for the Army of Northern Virginia. Lee had come to rely on Stuart for cavalry employment and for facilitating the passing of intelligence from these formations to Lee and the army's corps commanders. Habitually, cavalry commanders under Stuart would report intelligence to Stuart, who would relay it to Lee and Corps commanders, but this procedure was not consistent or standardized. Insight into this relationship can be seen in Stackpole's following observation:

Major Henry B. McClellan, Chief of Staff of the Cavalry Corps, Army of Northern Virginia, in his *Life of Stuart* says: 'It was not the want of cavalry that Lee bewailed, for he had enough of it had it been properly used. It was the absence of Stuart himself that he felt so keenly; on him he had learned to rely to such an extent that it seemed as if this cavalry were concentrated in his person, and from him alone could information be expected.'⁴⁰

Additionally, Lee did not designate or appoint a member of his staff for either intelligence or cavalry. Without reliable, direct communication with Stuart he could not effectively monitor the cavalry's actions or receive their intelligence.

The arrangement of command relationships of the brigades that remained with Lee further hampered his ability to control their movement in support of the army and benefit from what intelligence they received. Jones and Robertson were under Stuart's

⁴⁰ Stackpole, 51.

command. Lee authorized Stuart to detach two brigades to cover the mountain passes and then move to the flank once the army passes. Although Stuart gave them specific orders to accomplish these tasks and report enemy intelligence to Lee and Longstreet, the responsibility for follow on orders was not clear. Based on the command and control of the cavalry during previous operations and for reasons described earlier, Lee saw Stuart as the commander of cavalry in the army. Although detached, Lee would expect Stuart to control these forces, but due to Stuart's break in contact with these units and the army, he was not in position to command them. In Stackpole's words, "...Robertson's 3,000 troopers were of no perceptible use to Lee during the invasion, any more than were Stuart's 5,000. On the other hand, there is no evidence that Lee himself or his staff made any subsequent effort to recover these two powerful reconnaissance tools when it became evident that his basic plan for their utilization had gone awry."⁴¹

In the case of Jenkins, Lee had detached him from Stuart's command for the movement in front of Ewell's Corps, but he fully expected Stuart to regain control of this force. Lee had anticipated Jenkins's lack of effectiveness and wanted Stuart to direct him once he had arrived in Pennsylvania.⁴²

A discussion of command relationships in today's terms of attached OPCON (operational control) or TACON (tactical control) are relatively moot when considering the organization and relationship of command in 19th century warfare. The meanings and relationships were not built on such stringent definitions or expectation of control, as the means did not exist for immediately relaying instructions.⁴³

⁴¹ Stackpole, 51.

⁴² Coddington, 206.

⁴³ LtCol Bill Stringer, "Discussion at Gettysburg Staff Ride", 2 Oct 01.

It is evident that Lee retained authority over these units at all times, despite their direct report relationship with Stuart. Although Lee was aware of their actions through reports, he had a different expectation as to their anticipated moves and timings than they displayed once given the order to consolidate.⁴⁴ There is no evidence that Stuart tried to contact any of the brigades of cavalry with the main body after he broke contact with the army. Additionally, corps commanders possessed the ability to redirect these brigades' efforts should their orders require, but this did not happen until late into the march. The default reaction by Lee to allow Stuart such control would cause a severe degradation in flexibility once Stuart was out of contact. Lee, the Corps commanders, and the cavalry commanders were out of contact with Stuart for some time and waited too long before making adjustments to react to his departure and the command void.

Finally, these weaknesses in command and control were exacerbated by the manner and effectiveness of communication in use at the time. First, the nature of the orders in both content and verbiage, although acceptable for the period, allowed interpretation and did not always express in a clear manner the intent of the commander. Although this sometimes discretionary nature allowed for interpretation based on the situation, their ambiguity often left question as to their exact meaning. Secondly, the length of time between these communications and the time lost in transporting written orders further hampered the ability of a commander to understand his subordinates' situation and issue timely command and control guidance. These general conditions coupled with the ad hoc reporting chain in this situation further impacted the ability of the cavalry to provide effective reconnaissance and security during the campaign.

⁴⁴ Nesbitt, 185.

Mindset of the Army of Northern Virginia and the Cavalry

The myth of Southern military invincibility, built up by early Confederate successes, had endured for more than two years...Psychological warfare was not known by that name during the Civil War, but something analogous to it was surely a factor during the first half of the war, when general officers on both sides, in the eastern theater at least, became increasingly infected with the germ of Lee-Jackson infallibility.⁴⁵

Confederate success up to and through the Chancellorsville campaign had created a feeling of confidence and, it could be argued, overconfidence in the Army of Northern Virginia. This attitude was also present in the cavalry under Stuart's command. Stuart even staged an outward display of this in the grand review he organized in June prior to the campaign. The surprise engagement at Brandy Station the next day called infallibility of Confederate cavalry into question. Some argue that Stuart's brash conduct in his ride around the east of the Army of the Potomac was generated because of feelings that he had to again prove his division's prowess after the engagement. He failed in his true mission, however, when he knew Lee needed him and his reconnaissance reports.

With respect to the employment of the remaining brigades, the mindset of expected success worked against the leaders of the Army of Northern Virginia. Lee's caution and slow reaction to reorient these formations may indicate his overconfidence in Stuart and the cavalry, almost expecting things to come together as they had in the past. Stuart's almost autonomous direction to Robertson and Jones indicates a lack of thoughtful consideration of possible contingencies based on the bold movement he had in mind, particularly as he knew of their weaknesses.

The nature of the advance into enemy-controlled territory required just the opposite. The inherent risk of such a significant movement demanded full consideration

⁴⁵ Stackpole, xvii.

of effective and redundant command and control and greatly relied on timely intelligence and security to properly assemble and employ the army. Reliance on past success may have, in part, contributed to the reluctance to question the current disposition of the cavalry effort even after indications of potential trouble.

Chapter 5

Reflections on Failure

The conclusion must be drawn that while Stuart's vainglorious ride around the Union army was a gross misuse of horseflesh and manpower, it neither stripped Lee of cavalry nor deprived him of all opportunities to learn Hooker's whereabouts. There are no indications that Lee ordered the troopers still available to him to look for the enemy at the obvious places. Robertson was not an enterprising officer, and Lee was not the kind of commander to force him to be one.⁴⁶

Coddington's above conclusion touches on several aspects of the problem of employing cavalry during the Gettysburg campaign. There are many aspects to the argument of why Stuart chose his course to the east of the Union Army. An exploration of the circumstances around the remaining cavalry is central to the debate, for it addresses Lee's, Stuart's, the corps commanders', and the cavalry brigade commanders' shared blame for the failure to adjust and most effectively react to the changing friendly and enemy situation. The possible reasons for their ineffectiveness in assuming Stuart's position on the eastern flank of the army is important to understanding the entire reconnaissance and security failure. There are four major factors that contributed to the dysfunctional cavalry that remained with the main body.

Leadership and Initiative: Leaders at all levels, specifically the brigade commanders of cavalry, displayed a lack of initiative in reacting to the friendly situation and remaining on a narrowly defined focus of their initial missions despite a need to adjust for the absence of Stuart. Furthermore, the cavalry leaders did not possess or display the aggressiveness in their own or their units' actions required during a dynamic cavalry mission.

⁴⁶ Coddington, 186.

Capabilities of the Cavalry: The cavalry brigades that remained with the main body did not possess the experience or discipline to remain flexible to the changing situation and perform reconnaissance and security expected by the leadership of the Army of Northern Virginia. Even though Lee, Stuart, Ewell, and Longstreet had reservations about these units' capabilities, sufficient measures were not taken in preparation or execution to make them more effective.

Command and Control Relationships and Staff Organizations: The command and control relationships, reporting structure, and expectations for direction of these remaining brigades were not clearly understood nor executed. Furthermore, imprecise orders did not allow for the flexible employment or clear direction of the forces at hand. These circumstances were exacerbated by the lack of staff at the army level and an over reliance on Stuart who was not in position to act as chief of cavalry during the campaign.

Attitude of the Army of Northern Virginia and the Cavalry: A feeling of overconfidence in the leadership of the Army of Northern Virginia based on previous successes created an unhealthy atmosphere for command during a potentially risky operational setting. The reluctance to adjust cavalry missions based on a pervasive assurance that things would "work out" reduced the flexibility of the army to react to the changing situation.

The debate as to why these remaining brigades did not do more for the army during the campaign and who is to blame will continue. At best, these conclusions describe a shared blame. This study, however, does highlight some specific circumstances that address the remaining cavalry performance irrespective of Stuart's

ride. It is important to consider this in the entire context of the debate, as it was clearly not entirely Lee's, Stuart's, nor the brigade commanders fault alone.

Follow-on Actions and Application of Lessons

Following the campaign, there was great debate in the form of commander statements, after action reports, and popular press as to how Stuart's performance affected the Army of Northern Virginia. Lee's adjutant, Colonel Walter Herron Taylor, was one of the most vocal critics of Stuart's performance and blamed Lee's lack of intelligence directly on him. Others, including Colonel Mosby, argued that Stuart's actions were within the discretion allowed by Lee's orders.

Potential and evident lessons learned from the Gettysburg Campaign should have included a review of orders issued, a discussion of command and control procedures, and a standardization of intelligence collection and dissemination during combat operations. What is displayed in following campaigns is that the army and its leaders generally continued to follow the same procedures as they had prior to the Gettysburg Campaign. During subsequent operations Stuart remained close at hand to both Lee and his cavalry.

If any adjustment could be discerned, it may be that Stuart's actions in the Wilderness Campaign were more cautious to the detriment of his effectiveness. During the initial phases of the campaign, Stuart attempted to maintain contact with General Ulysses S. Grant's approaching force. Stuart sent small detachments toward the enemy, but could not gather details on whether Grant intended to hurry or slow his concentration of forces. Dowdey's observation is useful, "Stuart had not tried to mount a force to break through the Federal screen. (In February, when Kilpatrick and Dahlgren took their

raiding parties toward Richmond, Stuart sent only one token brigade after them.) As a result, the cavalry chief had brought [Lee] no information on the size of the enemy.”⁴⁷

Stuart’s caution was due in part to conserving his forces, as replacements were few and resupply increasingly difficult. His tentativeness in this situation, however, indicates a caution not apparent in his earlier operations. Stuart would be mortally wounded at Yellow Tavern, and his loss would be devastating not only to the effectiveness of the cavalry of the Army of Northern Virginia but also to Lee personally.⁴⁸ When he heard that Stuart was dying of his wounds, Lee stated, “...a most valuable and able officer,” and then added in a voice of deep feeling, “He never brought me a piece of false information.”⁴⁹ Further evidence as to the weight of this loss can be understood by one of Lee’s later comments, “Sorely missed by Lee...both military and moral, of JEB Stuart, who was not only his cavalry chief but also a family friend. Lee had been hit hard by Stuart’s death, telling an aide, ‘I can scarcely think of him without weeping.’”⁵⁰

Stuart was Lee’s hub for intelligence and cavalry operations for the army. Lieutenant Colonel Stringer described the relationship, saying that Lee was suspect of intelligence from any other source but JEB Stuart. It was as if it were almost not true, until Lee heard it from him. This proven relationship did not fail them until the circumstances of the Gettysburg Campaign. It would be difficult to change their rapport and operating procedures after its proven success leading up to those events, and it

⁴⁷ Clifford Dowdey, *Lee’s Last Campaign: The Story of Lee & His men against Grant-1864* (USA: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 69.

⁴⁸ John W. Thomason Jr., *Jeb Stuart*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 498.

⁴⁹ Noah A. Trudeau, *Bloody Roads South: The Wilderness to Cold Harbor may-June 1864* (USA: LSU Press, 2000), 184.

appears to be evident that they returned to their comfort zone after the campaign without significant adjustment.

Under examination, the tales that have grown about Stuart bear little resemblance to what really happened on that arduous, five-week cavalry campaign. A careful analysis of the Official Records directing Stuart's action by military orders also diverges from what others thought he was supposed to do in the campaign. The differences between the orders and reports and the criticisms and controversies spawned by them recalls the story of an old confederate soldier. After telling about his numerous battles with his regiment, another old soldier calls him on it—he had been with the unit and it had engaged in many of those battles. “Damn”, said the first Confederate. “Another good story ruined by an eye witness.”⁵¹

After significant study, much of the weight of the debate on the Confederate Cavalry performance focuses on circumstances surrounding Stuart's break in contact with the main body. Many address the fact that Lee had sufficient cavalry forces that remained with him to address this situation. It is important, however, to consider why and how these forces and their leaders present failed to adequately react to and respond to the lack of reconnaissance and security created by Stuart's departure. Based on the reasons discussed, it is not a clear-cut argument where blame or responsibility can be easily assigned. Although General Lee is ultimately responsible for the army's performance, there is evidence that leaders at several levels share the blame in failing him at crucial periods.

⁵⁰ Richard Wheeler, *On Fields of Fury: From the Wilderness to the Crater An eyewitness History* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 233.

⁵¹ Nesbitt, xix.

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